

The Enlightenment of Zankov's "High Difficulty" Principle on Classical Chinese Teaching in Primary Schools^{*}

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Zankov's "high difficulty" principle requires teachers to stimulate students' desire to learn by setting reasonable difficulty barriers for students, so as to develop students' spiritual strength to the greatest extent. The principle of "high difficulty" contains the philosophical significance from quantitative change to qualitative change as well as general and special development. From the "high difficulty" principle, the problems in the teaching of classical Chinese in primary schools mainly include: arbitrarily increasing the difficulty of teaching materials and exercises, with failing to achieve the teaching objectives of classical Chinese; the single form of class fails to arouse students' interest in learning; and blindly pursuing the equalization of learning progress and failing to take care of differentiated students. This paper is to explore the strategies of solving the problem existing in current primary school Chinese teaching: reasonably control the difficulty and depth of teaching, while pay attention to the cultivation of good learning motivation; adopt appropriate and efficient teaching methods to promote the systematization of classical Chinese knowledge; correctly understand the individual differences of students and adopt hierarchical teaching.

Keywords: Zankov, "high difficulty" principle, classical Chinese teaching in primary school, enlightenment

The Connotation of Zankov's "High Difficulty" Principle

Who can be in the "development of teaching theory" puts forward five teaching principles: "difficult" principle, the principle of "high speed," the principle of "theoretical guidance role," "to make the students understand the teaching principles of the learning process and make all the students are generally development" principle, the principle of each supplement each other, closely linked, in the principle of the "difficult" in the whole system (Zankov, 2008). Zankov (2008) pointed out in the book *Teaching and Development*, "The concept of 'difficulty' refers to overcoming obstacles and students' efforts." Based on Lev Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development" theory, this principle requires teachers to stimulate students' learning motivation by setting obstacles of reasonable difficulties for students, so that students can learn actively. At the same time, on

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the basis of "the principle of acceptability" to control the teaching from easy to difficult, fully develop children's spiritual power. However, Zankov (2008) also pointed out that "high difficulty" does not mean to raise difficulty blindly, but to learn to grasp the proper degree of difficulty. Of course, the proper degree of difficulty does not mean to reduce the difficulty of teaching, but to choose the textbooks and syllabus with appropriate difficulty through understanding the students' knowledge mastery and the degree of using skills. Zankov's "high difficulty" principle not only has a profound impact on the education system reform of later generations, but also has a profound philosophy.

First of all, it is a dialectical law that changes from quantity to quality. Zankov (2008) believed that teachers should pay attention to the "specific degree of difficulty" in teaching, aiming to make the design of textbooks not only adapt to the situation of the whole class, but also according to the situation of individual students, so as to "teach students according to their aptitude." To gradually improve the difficulty of knowledge, let students understand the knowledge gradually in-depth (Zankov, 2008). At the same time, he also pointed out in the book *Teaching and Development* that "the principle of teaching with high difficulty also determines the structure of teaching content, so the textbook should not only be more extensive and in-depth, but also have qualitative characteristics" (Zankov, 2008). Within the acceptable range of students, knowledge capacity should be expanded in an all-round way, all aspects of knowledge should be revealed, and students should be aroused to think deeply, so that they can realize the intrinsic relationship between various kinds of knowledge in the process of overcoming obstacles. This is the dialectical law of quantitative change and qualitative change reflected in Zankov's "high difficulty" principle. Students accumulate quantitative changes on the basis of gradually increasing difficulty. Only when such quantitative changes reach a certain level can their learning levels have a qualitative leap.

It is the combination of general development and individual character development next. In his theory of experimental teaching, Zankov (2008) pointed out the importance of students' development as a whole, and advocated promoting students' general development from many aspects, such as observation ability, thinking ability, and practical operation ability. In addition, he also advocated the combination of students' general development and individual development. He believed that the teaching difficulty should be properly controlled, and students should not be set up to overcome too difficult obstacles, otherwise they will embark on the road of mechanical memorization. On the contrary, we should appropriately reduce the difficulty of teaching, give students enough space for the development of their personality, respect students' personal characteristics and aspirations, so as to promote the development of students in various aspects.

The Status of Problems Existing in Classical Chinese Teaching of Primary Schools from the Principle of "High Difficulty"

Classical Chinese is a wonderful flower in the treasure house of ancient Chinese traditional culture, which is concise in language, profound in implication, and vivid in image. It not only records and spreads the ancient Chinese culture, but also leaves a lot of profound philosophy for later generations. The teaching of classical Chinese has always been the focus of China's educational undertakings because of its distinct advantages of knowledge, interest, and philosophy. Since the new curriculum reform, some classical Chinese has also begun to enter the primary school Chinese textbooks, primary school students have also begun to contact and learn classical Chinese, in-depth feel the charm of classical Chinese, improve literary literacy, for the middle and high school classical Chinese learning to lay a foundation. However, because classical Chinese has been used

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for a long time, and most of it is abstract and general, it will be difficult to understand for primary school students who lack the accumulation of classical Chinese knowledge. Meanwhile, it also poses a great challenge to the teaching of classical Chinese for primary school teachers. In his Humble Opinion on Classical Chinese Teaching Reform, Mr. Qian Menglong (1997) once said, "Classical Chinese teaching is a 'dead end' of Chinese teaching reform. Even in the prosperous era of Chinese teaching reform, classical Chinese teaching, a 'hereditary territory,' is still a scene of 'spring breeze does not pass the yunmenguan'" (pp. 25-27). Although in recent years, "Chinese learning fever" and "Chinese language fever" have prevailed, it is not difficult to find that there are many problems in classical Chinese teaching in today's primary schools.

The Arbitrary Increase in the Difficulty of Teaching Materials and Exercises Fails to Achieve Teaching Objectives in Classical Chinese

Classical Chinese teaching should pay attention to the selection of teaching objectives, teaching material contents, exercises and examination questions, which is the key to the effectiveness of classical Chinese teaching. Throughout today's classical Chinese teaching in primary schools, some teachers do not start from the reality of primary students, arbitrarily increase the difficulty of textbooks and exercises or extend classical Chinese knowledge too much, which violates the objective law of students' learning, resulting in students' suffering in the classical Chinese learning process, burdened with huge learning pressure. Primary school is the learning stage that lays the foundation for middle school and university learning, but because the primary school students are still young and have little experience, they have not yet had enough knowledge accumulation, and they are the first time to contact classical Chinese, so the study of classical Chinese in primary school is a big challenge for them. If teachers set too difficult learning obstacles for them, they will not only take the road of mechanical memorization, but also gradually lose their confidence in classical Chinese learning after repeated failures and have fear of advanced classical Chinese learning, which will greatly kill the enthusiasm of students in learning. Moreover, if the classical Chinese knowledge selected is too basic, it cannot reach the established teaching objectives completely, cannot make students appear in front of the obstacles that should be overcome, hinder the development of students' spiritual power. Therefore, teachers should choose textbooks and classical Chinese exercises with appropriate difficulty, and do a good job of natural connection with classical Chinese knowledge in junior high schools, so that the development of students will not appear weak and weak.

The Single Form of Class Fails to Arouse Students' Interest in Learning

At present, some primary school students are less and less interested in classical Chinese learning, and it is not difficult to find that the reason is caused by the boring teaching methods of some teachers. Teacher has a single form of class, lack of flexibility, class just simply go through the process: take the students to read the text, and then explain the words and sentences, and finally let the students talk about the thoughts and feelings contained in it, let the students read and recite after class, that is all. Then ask: How can such a boring class make students to learn classical Chinese knowledge full of passion? The boring class makes students in the learning process does not appear a certain degree of obstacles, teachers mechanically introduce classical Chinese background, students in learning classical Chinese is only rigidly memorized, mechanical transcription of teachers give the vernacular Chinese translation, which greatly killed the creativity of students in learning. At the same time, teachers only one-sided emphasis on some points in the teaching process will make students unable to combine all kinds of classical Chinese knowledge organically and lead to knowledge fragmentation,

which is not conducive to the cultivation of students' learning motivation. If things go on like this, students' expectation for classical Chinese learning will be exhausted.

The Blind Pursuit of Equal Learning Progress Fails to Take Care of Differentiated Students

Some teachers ignore the process of each student mastering knowledge and skills in classical Chinese teaching, unable to teach students in accordance with their aptitude, but blindly pursue the equalization of students' learning progress, blindly trying to pull the learning progress of students with different learning levels in a level, which is obviously divorced from the teaching reality. Some teachers in some relatively weak foundation of classical Chinese students have not mastered the classical Chinese words in the class, just like other students continue to inculcate him extracurricular knowledge of classical Chinese, is only forced growth. If teachers teach so quickly, greatly increase the difficulty of learning, eager to achieve success, will only continue to widen the gap between students, counterproductive. Some contents in the teaching design can be accepted by students at a certain learning stage, but it may be too difficult for students at a lower level, while students at a higher level need to accept more complex teaching contents, which are different from person to person. Each student has different levels of learning foundation, each has its own learning characteristics, they should also accept different degrees of classical Chinese teaching, and teachers should be for each student, for the whole student group to choose appropriate, efficient teaching content and teaching methods.

The Enlightenment of High Difficulty Principle to Classical Chinese Teaching in Primary Schools

Nowadays, although classical Chinese teaching is the focus of every Chinese teaching stage, it is full of morbid conditions. It can be seen that people are blindly pursuing the "fever of traditional Chinese learning," but few people think about: What is the purpose of classical Chinese teaching in primary schools? What exactly is being taught and how? The author believes that how to guide students to master classical Chinese knowledge is the current primary school Chinese teaching problem to be solved.

The Reasonable Control of the Difficulty and Depth of Teaching and the Attention Paid to the Cultivation of Good Learning Motivation

Zankov pointed out in the book *Teaching and Development*: "The degree of difficulty depends on the degree of difficulty to adjust" (2008). Therefore, the difficulty and depth of both the selection of teaching material content and the selection of exercises and examination content after class should be reasonably controlled, and can be adjusted flexibly with the learning situation of students. On the basis of moderate teaching difficulty and depth, the good learning motivation of primary school students in learning classical Chinese should be cultivated.

First of all, the difficulty and depth of classical Chinese teaching in primary schools should conform to the basic objectives of classical Chinese teaching in primary schools. The chairman of the national language will miss cui mountain in an academic conference has mentioned what he considers the present elementary school writings in classical style teaching goal: "primary school writings in classical style teaching, designed to reflect the cohesion of elementary school and junior high school, mainly is to get students to meet and feel the preliminary study of classical Chinese so that the junior high school not feel strange." Thus, it can be seen that the primary school stage is only the foundation stage of classical Chinese learning in junior high school. It only leads students to have a preliminary understanding of classical Chinese and completes the transition and

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connection with classical Chinese learning in junior high school, so the teaching difficulty and depth should not be too large. Zankov (2008) believed that teachers should properly control the difficulty and depth of instructional instruction and teaching methods to make the classical Chinese knowledge acceptable to students. Otherwise, students would be forced to go on the road of mechanical memorization, and the classical Chinese knowledge would only be learned simply without understanding. Such teaching and learning would become meaningless. In addition, Zankov (2008) once pointed out that the concept of "difficulty" includes the level of "students' efforts," so students' good learning motivation is the basis of teachers' teaching. In teaching, teachers should set up obstacles that exceed the difficulty of the syllabus for students according to the knowledge and skills mastered by different students. In teaching, a certain degree of extra-curricular knowledge expansion can be involved, so that they can have fun in learning and develop good learning motivation in the process of overcoming obstacles. When it comes to difficult knowledge groups or needs to connect all kinds of classical Chinese knowledge, teachers can give appropriate guidance to students to deepen their understanding of classical Chinese knowledge and expand their knowledge scope. Such as teachers in teaching writings in classical style "Yu boya unique string" when the need to develop the students' extracurricular knowledge, teachers ask students "perfect" word in the article in the topic and let them guess the meaning of this word what other meanings, when the students answer the text of the word "unique" means "cut off," the teachers can give students a certain amount of outside the context of classical Chinese statements, such as "three gorges," "as for ling xia water duct, along the back block" of the "perfect" said isolation; and such as "absolutely" in "Peach Blossom Garden" in "rate his wife Yi people to this despair" means "isolation;" "Persuasive learning" in the "cannot water also, but the river" of "absolutely" said cross Teachers can give students a vernacular explanation of each sentence to let them guess the meaning of the word "Ju" in each sentence, and guide students to master the meaning of the word "Ju" step-by-step, thus, expanding their classical Chinese knowledge.

Secondly, Zankov (2008) believed that what he refers to as "moderation of difficulty" is not to reduce difficulty, but a necessary factor to make reasonable use of the principle of "high difficulty," that is to say, the textbook provided must be understandable by students. Therefore, in the process of classical Chinese teaching, the content of teaching materials is also the key to effective teaching. The difficulty of textbook arrangement should be from easy to difficult with the rise of grade, so that students can gradually deepen their mastery of classical Chinese knowledge, which conforms to the goal orientation of classical Chinese teaching for primary school students. As one of Chinese textbooks for primary schools, one to six grade teaching material layout is reasonable, one to grade four part involves only a simple poems, such as "chunxiao," "xu liu," "pring," and so on. These poems are easy to memorize and easy to understand. With the rise of the grade, the difficulty of ancient poetry gradually increases, which lays the foundation for the preliminary study of classical Chinese in grade five or six years. Grade students through the accumulation of learning before had mastered the basic knowledge of a certain amount of classical Chinese, has the ability of learning more difficult classical style, so the Grade five Part ii programmed writings in classical style "of young's son," students in Grade six days a writings in classical style "yu boya unique string, Grade six Part ii is to arrange students to learn the writings in classical style two—"learning yi" and "two children arguing day." From the fifth grade to the sixth grade, the teaching materials are arranged from scattered to concentrated, the length of classical Chinese articles is constantly lengthened, the number of classical Chinese words involved is constantly increasing, the difficulty of understanding and the intensity of learning are also increasing, the difficulty setting of the content of the teaching materials is just right, conforming to the psychological law of children's cognition. In addition, the teaching materials should be arranged to choose the learning theme suitable for primary school students to learn and understand. Themes hidden too deep or difficult to understand or not suitable for the age of primary school students to learn and interpret should not be put into the primary school Chinese textbooks; on the contrary, the positive, mining difficulty moderate, enlightening theme is the primary school students should learn the classical Chinese theme. According to the current arrangement of primary school Chinese textbooks published by People's Education Press, the learning theme of the four classical Chinese texts is from concrete to abstract, from external to inner, and the requirements for students' understanding ability are gradually increasing, which is in line with the overall arrangement characteristics of primary school textbooks.

The choice of exercises outside the classroom also has a great impact on students' learning of classical Chinese knowledge, so it is important for teachers to grasp the difficulty of exercises outside the classroom when assigning homework. In the book *Teaching and Development*, Zankov (2008) pointed out: "The characteristic of the principle of teaching with high difficulty is not to raise some abstract 'average difficulty standard,' but to develop children's spiritual strength, make this strength have room for activity and give guidance." The original intention for teachers to assign extracurricular exercises is to enrich students' extracurricular exercises selected by teachers should be of certain difficulty, which should exceed the in-class knowledge but be controlled within a certain range, so as to effectively promote students' learning of classical Chinese. However, it is an unreasonable teaching method to raise the average difficulty standard of extracurricular exercises, so as to make them divorced from the teaching practice.

The Adoption of Appropriate and Efficient Teaching Methods to Promote the Systematization of Classical Chinese Knowledge

In the book *Teaching and Development*, Zankov (2008) pointed out that "the great significance of the principle of 'high difficulty' lies in mastering certain knowledge, so that it not only becomes the property of students, but also causes them to rethink the knowledge in the later process of cognition. This is the systematization of knowledge, and the structure of this systematization is complex." Due to the heavy, obscure, and highly summarized classical Chinese classics, most primary school students have always been afraid to get close to classical Chinese classics and lack interest in learning classical Chinese. In addition, nowadays, more and more boring and dull classical Chinese classes in primary schools appear, which make students dare not "get close to" classical Chinese. In this regard, Zankov (2008) believed that teachers should adopt appropriate and efficient teaching methods to stimulate students' interest in learning, promote the systematization of classical Chinese knowledge, and make students' mastery of classical Chinese knowledge qualitatively changed.

First of all, pay attention to the introduction and improve students' interest in learning. Zankov (2008) believed that teachers should fully develop children's spiritual strength in the teaching process, give this strength room for activities, and give them appropriate guidance in this process. One aspect of the "spiritual power" he refers to is students' interest in learning classical Chinese—Interest is the best teacher, and only people who are interested in classical Chinese can learn quickly and well. Primary school students are mainly learning modern and fresh language, never in life contact with classical Chinese, to let students interested in classical Chinese, teachers need to deliberately to cultivate (Liu, 2010, pp. 60-61). Therefore,

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primary school teachers must attach great importance to the teaching effect in the classroom, and arouse students' interest in learning classical Chinese from all aspects by combining primary students' personality characteristics and learning acceptance ability. As the saying goes, "A good beginning is half the battle." Therefore, a good introduction will determine the students' learning attitude towards the text knowledge (Ruan, 2016, p. 268). The way for teachers to import new lesson is varied, can seize the unit teaching in common, a natural transition from the old knowledge to new knowledge learning, also can learn by sharing stories and idioms, guessing the charm of the writings in classical style to show students in all aspects, let students actively participate in the writings in classical style of the class. For example, when teaching "Son of Young," teachers can ask students to share the short stories about describing the wise characters in ancient times collected before class, so as to serve as a guide for learning the text and stimulate their interest in learning. For example, the teacher can take the students to follow the music "High Mountains and Running Water" before the detailed analysis of the text to read the classical Chinese and infect the students through the music. In short, teachers should pay attention to the import, in the import is good at seizing the interest of students, guide students to understand the text step-by-step, keep stimulating their interest in learning, so that they from "I want to be learn" into "I want to learn."

Secondly, moderate expansion; enhance the extension of reading ability. In the book *Teaching and Development*, Zankov (2008) pointed out: "If materials and teaching methods make students face no obstacles that should be overcome, then children's development will be sluggish." Therefore, the teaching of classical Chinese in primary schools should not be limited to a few classical Chinese texts in textbooks. Teachers should moderately expand students' classical Chinese learning in class and after class to enrich their knowledge. Such as in guiding students to study when the two children arguing day, due to the elementary knowledge of classical Chinese reserves is limited, the teachers can use questions the text of rhetorical devices are used to make moderate expansion—both pediatric moments in the dialogue with the metaphor rhetoric and rhetorical question sentence, in order to help students deepen understanding of the classical Chinese rhetoric. And like a professor in the yu boya unique string, class, teachers can ask students hammer period due to illness yu boya after death for in-class expansion, can also give students a little homework after class: class to collect some like "yu boya unique string" the praise deep friendship of the writings in classical style, everyone together to share the next class. In this way, the combination of Chinese teaching in class and outside class has been realized, and the ability of students to extend reading has been enhanced, which is conducive to the study of classical Chinese at higher levels in junior and senior high schools.

Thirdly, transfer is applied to promote the qualitative change of classical Chinese learning. Zankov (2008) pointed out, "Students master certain knowledge, should make these knowledge not only become the students' property, but also in the later process of cognition can cause the knowledge to think again." This "rethinking" is the ability to transfer knowledge. Only when students learn to systematize the classical Chinese knowledge they have learned and draw inferences from one example in the process of knowledge application can they achieve the qualitative change of classical Chinese learning in a real sense. In addition, Zankov (2008) also pointed out that teachers should learn to guide students to understand the interdependence of phenomena and their intrinsic connections in class, and explain all kinds of classical Chinese knowledge in combination, instead of separating the connections among the knowledge. The textbooks published by People's Education Press for the first grade of primary Chinese begin to involve a certain amount of ancient poetry, such as *Thoughts on a Quiet Night, Spring Dawn*, and *Village Living*, etc. When teaching classical Chinese in the fifth

or sixth grade, teachers can guide students to transfer the previous method of learning ancient poetry in the lower grade to classical Chinese learning. Such as learning teachers often teach students with the ancient Chinese poems after the comments to understand the meaning of ancient Chinese poems, in general notes after class are difficult to understand the key words of explanation (such as "yi" of the word "yi") or the student does not come in contact with some of the history of introduction, so the emergence of the annotation is the key to the students understand the meaning. Therefore, the teacher in teaching students' writings in classical style can take the experience of the students in learning poems have migrated, guides the student according to the comments to understand the meaning after class, it can not only cultivate students' ability of autonomous learning, can also from the true sense to promote them to accumulate knowledge and learning methods of classical Chinese, leap to the quantitative to qualitative changes.

The Correct understanding of the Individual Differences of Students and the Adoption of Hierarchical Teaching

Zankov (2008) believed that every student is an independent individual, with its unique cognitive mode and individual development law, and how to make every student, including the underachiever, develop is the top priority in teaching. Therefore, teachers should learn to recognize the differences among each student in the teaching process. People tend to divide students into two categories: "top students" and "underachievers," and now with the development of society, people's sense of democracy is more and more strong, the education of underachievers has also received certain attention. In view of this, Zankov (2008) pointed out in the book Teaching and Development: "Understanding the progress of students' mastery of knowledge and skills is the necessary supplementary material for the congruent of difficulty proportion, so that the congruent of difficulty proportion can be based on the situation of the whole class of students, as well as the situation of individual students, in accordance with the personal characteristics of the teaching material. Therefore, teachers should teach students according to their aptitude in classical Chinese classes, and adopt hierarchical teaching according to the knowledge mastered by each student. Blindly pursuing the equalization of students' learning progress will only limit the improvement of the top students' learning ability, and also make the underachieving students lose their confidence in learning and abandon themselves. Therefore, it is completely unrealistic to force the learning level of students with different learning levels to a horizontal line. Now that, there are two categories of "top students" and "underachievers," teachers might as well divide the students into these two levels and adopt stratified teaching. One of the first prerequisites' of adopting hierarchical teaching is that this classification method must be concealed, which can only be regarded as the division of a student group existing in the teacher's heart, and cannot be very obvious in the daily teaching activities. At the same time, teachers should pay attention to the fact that although students are divided into two categories, they only have some differences in classical Chinese learning ability, and only temporarily. Their roles are likely to switch to each other, and they should not deny the other aspects of the "underachieving students" directly, otherwise it will leave a shadow on the underachieving students. This dichotomy is a kind of classification method is more reasonable, and its rationality is divided into two levels convenient teacher to arrange teaching contents and teaching management mechanism, to the "top students" decorate some difficulty slightly larger writings in classical style practice after class, after class is to understand the text content to the requirement of the "underachiever," skilled to recite the text after perusal, again is arranged some of the more fundamental problem. On the contrary, the classification of levels will bring great mental pressure to teachers; lead to the confusion of teaching wit, but also to the underachieving students will cause psychological discomfort. Therefore, the hierarchical teaching method pays attention to the reasonable differences among students, realizes the reasonable allocation of teaching resources, and enhances the confidence of underachieving students, so that the "top students" are more "excellent," and the "underachieving students" continue to stride toward the goal of "top students."

Conclusion

In a word, although Zankov's time has been half a century away from ours, his "high difficulty" principle is still applicable to the classical Chinese teaching in primary schools today. His teaching thought has the important enlightening and instructive significance for the present teaching development, we should draw lessons from it in the teaching practice, let the new era of primary school classical Chinese teaching reform usher in a new spring!

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